

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

April 2, 2009

The Honorable David Obey  
Chairman  
Subcommittee on Labor, HHS,  
Education and Related Agencies  
House Appropriations Committee  
Room H-218, the Capitol  
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Todd Tiahrt  
Ranking Member  
Subcommittee on Labor, HHS,  
Education and Related Agencies  
House Appropriations Committee  
1016 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Obey and Ranking Member Tiahrt:

As you begin work on the Fiscal Year 2010 Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education Appropriations bill, we urge you to reconsider funding for the Community-Based Abstinence Education (CBAE) program, and to instead devote those dollars to other, more effective programs. We thank you for decreasing the funding for the CBAE program by \$14 million in the FY09 omnibus legislation, and with your help and leadership, we can continue on the path to eliminate funding for this ineffective program altogether.

In this economic crisis, we cannot afford to continue to spend money on programs that have been proven ineffective. In April 2007, the independent research firm Mathematica Policy Research, Inc. released a study, commissioned by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), concluding that students in "abstinence-only" programs are no more likely to abstain from sex, delay initiation of sex, or have fewer sexual partners than students who receive no sex education at all.

Currently, 22 states along with the District of Columbia have refused "abstinence-only" funding. Thirteen states have published evaluations of these programs showing no long-term positive effects, and that in some cases young people who participated in the programs actually increased their sexual activity.

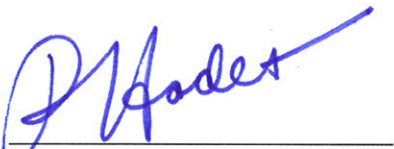
Not only do these programs not help our teens abstain from sex, many are rife with scientific inaccuracies, factual errors, and troubling biases that put our teens at greater risk for unintended pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases. A 2004 House Government Reform Committee report found that more than two-thirds of CBAE grantees used curricula that "contain false, misleading or distorted information about reproductive health," such as that condoms fail more often than they actually do, that sweat and tears can transmit HIV, and that women need "financial support" while men need "admiration." Furthermore, a 2006 Government Accountability Office (GAO) report found that HHS provides little oversight of federally funded "abstinence-only" programs in regard to medical accuracy. The GAO also found that, by censoring important health information about condoms, CBAE grantees are not in compliance with section 317P(c)(2) of the Public Health Services Act.

As our nation begins to focus more on improving health care quality and reducing wasteful and unnecessary spending, commonsense programs like comprehensive sex education should become a priority. Complete, accurate, and age-appropriate sex education helps young people reduce their risk of unintended pregnancies and STIs, including HIV/AIDS. At a time when the teen birth rate is on the rise and the CDC estimates that 1 in 2 young people will have an STI by age 25 this must be a public health priority. Currently the United States has no federal sex education program, and we urge Congress to

invest in promoting comprehensive sex education in our schools and communities. Preventive programs like these are supported by parents, promote health and wellness, and are an important step toward both health care reform and fiscal responsibility.

In light of the numerous reports showing that abstinence-only programs are ineffective, we believe it is inappropriate to fund these discredited programs. More than \$1 billion has been spent on "abstinence-only" programs in the last decade. The CBAE account increased from \$20 million in FY01 to \$113 million in FY08. We applaud you for cutting the CBAE funding from \$113 million to \$99 million in FY09. We urge you to eliminate funding for the CBAE "abstinence-only" program for the upcoming fiscal year. Our teens – and our taxpaying constituents – deserve nothing less.

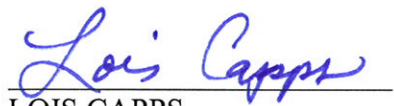
Sincerely,



PAUL W. HODES  
Member of Congress



LOUISE SLAUGHTER  
Member of Congress



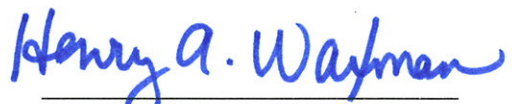
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Member of Congress



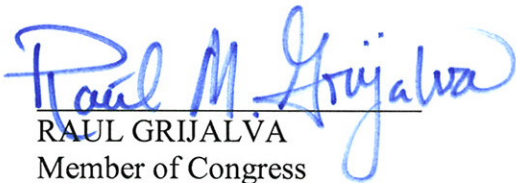
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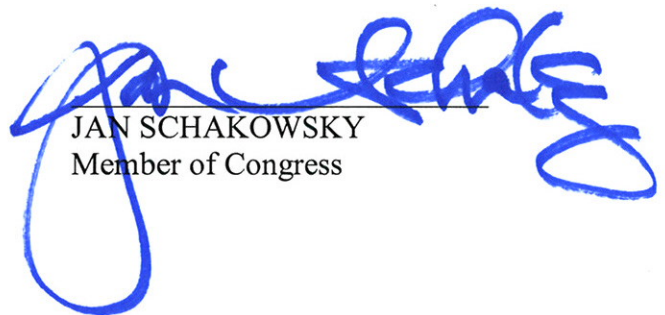
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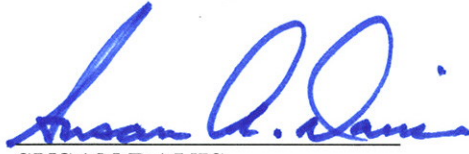
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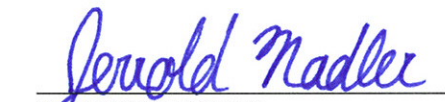
  
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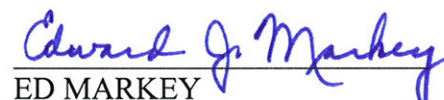
  
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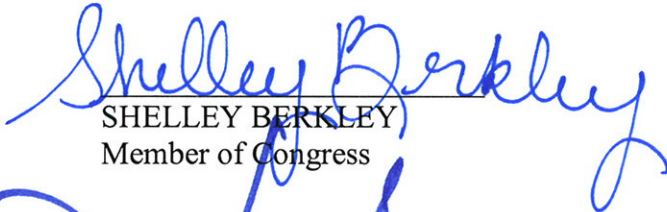
  
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Member of Congress



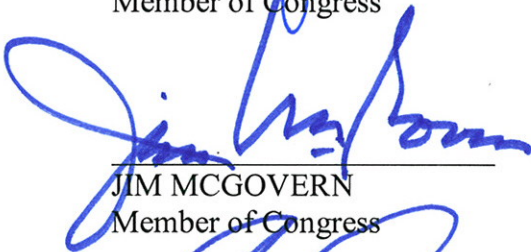
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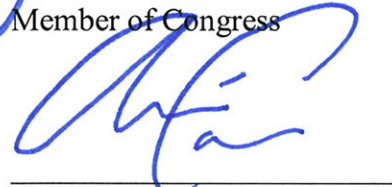
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